Start Made on Development of Saanich Arboretum

By Vera Scott

This is a view of part of Playfair Park where work is already started on development of an arboretum. Saanich may get a 100-acre national garden eventually in the Beaver Lake Park area.

Planting in Progress

AFTER THE STOCK market crash in 1929 that ent Canada and the United States into a dizzying economic tailspin, few people had courage to dream of anything more than recovering their lost livelihood.

But in 1931, when conditions had slipped from bad to worse, Edward W. Hammond, a resident of Saanichton, dared to dream a dream of beauty —an arboretum for Saanich Peninsula that could quite possibly be developed into a national arboretum.

"What I have in mind," he wrote at that time, "is something after the type of the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew, England, or the Arnold Arboretum in the States . . ."

It was apparently the wrong time to contemplate anything so beautiful as an arboretum. For nearly three decades the dream flickered, lay dormant, but never quite died. In 1958, it was manifested again.

A group of plant lovers have been working for a long time on the idea of promoting an arboretum on Saanich Peninsula; a living collection, or a living museum of trees, shrubs, and woody plants, native or introduced, growing in a parklike area, all properly named and decoratively arranged as part of the landscape.

Former reeve Arthur Ash, who was first contacted by a member of the arboretum organizing group, heartily endorsed the project and delegated the parks committee to assist in finding suitable land. Present Reeve George Chatterton and Councillor Charles Nelles supported the scheme and Parks Superintendent A. E. Richman started work with the group.

Playfair Park, 8½ acres of natural parkland with some Garry oak and a few fir, rising in the south to a rocky outcrop, was finally selected.

The area represents a well-preserved habitat that is typical of Saanich Peninsula. The oak leaf mould in the area is ideal organic matter for successful growth. A preliminary planting plan has been drawn up, and a start made on clearing the ground. Paths have been laid out, and the ground parking area designated. An irrigation and watering system will be installed. Planting beds are being prepared.

The present children's play area will be fenced off for the time being and will remain in use until a suitable substitute playground is prepared elsewhere.

PLANTING OF SHRUBS was begun this spring. A profusion of colorful rhododendrons and azaleas will eventually dominate the overall scene of sweeping lawns, pools, and paths with sheltering trees filtering the sunlight necessary for the long blooming of the rhododendrons.

The rhododendron takes its name from the Greek and means "Tree Rose." Varying in size from dwarf shrublets to small trees, its gorgeous blossoms and magnificent foliage will be a source of pleasure and pride to residents, and a delightful attraction to tourists and visitors. Hundreds of Oriental species, the full range of British hybrids, and the majority of rhododendron species from all parts of the world can be grown successfully on this coast.

Azaleas are among the most beautiful flowering shrubs in existence. Most forms produce flowers abundantly in spring and early summer. Their colors range through pink, red and purple shades to white, yellow, orange and scarlet, with all the intermediate hues. The new and fragrant Ilam hybrids from New Zealand introduce an entirely different range of colors never before seen in plants of this type. There are "rich brick reds, a luminous crimson, the flashing brilliance of orange scarlet, a complete range of yellows from the most delicate light shades to a distinctive tangerine hue. The pinks are limited but there are a number of clear, frosty tones which are delightful to see."

Dr. Adam Szczawinski, who is a member of the board of directors of the Arboretum Society, asserts: "Mild winters, ample rainfall, and no extremes of temperature are gifts of nature that set this area aside from most parts of the world. Perhaps in no other section of the globe, except probably southern England, do weather conditions permit the growth of as wide a variety of temperate zone plants.

"Little has been done in Canada so far by way of producing plants from the Southern Hemisphere. There is a wealth of material from this and other parts of the world from which, some day, may come beauty now wholly unknown to Pacific Northwest plant lovers."

Apart from the definite beautification of Saanich and the publicity for Saanich as the "Garden Peninsula," there will be the added educational value of such an enterprise. Residents can copy planting methods and learn the names of trees and shrubs, both native and non-native, deciduous and flowering. With the co-operation of the schools, it will tend to develop a strong love of nature among young students.

DR. ALBERT SCHWEITZER, philosopher, physician, missionary, and one of the greatest humanitarians of our time, writes: "The deeper we look into Nature, the more we recognize that it is full of life and the more profoundly we know that all life is a secret and that we are united with all life that is in Nature . . . From this knowledge comes our spiritual relationship with the Universe."

Though Playfair Park is not as large as the arboretum group had in mind, and cannot be extended in any direction, the society has hopes that in the near future a suitably large portion —100 acres or more—of the Beaver Lake area will be set aside for the development of a full-scale national arboretum.

Development of an arboretum requires hard work, community effort, and time. But not so much time as might be supposed. Five years ago in Oregon a group of enthusiastic volunteers created a large rhododendron garden with the co-operation of the city of Portland on land that the city provided. Today, the garden is one of the greatest tourist attractions in the state and at a special rhododendron show held in the gardens last year, a paid attendance of 25,000 was recorded.

The proceeds were used for further development of the gardens. Similar arboreta in other cities such as Ottawa, Hamilton and Seattle have proved of immense value to their communities.

The Saanich Peninsula society has sent letters to all Vancouver Island members of the Nurserymen's Association, and other growers. The response has been wonderful. Large amounts of planting material from many of the smaller commercial growers, sincerely interested in the project, have been donated.

In addition to donations of planting material, the door of the arboretum is open to all those who desire to support the idea. Active members are welcome as patrons who might wish to contribute financially to the project.

A dream that was born in 1931 is well on the way to being realized. Gardens and their beauty, the sense of tranquility and relaxation that are part of them, are necessary to maintain a balance between the utilitarian and the beautiful.

THIS WEEK'S ANAGRAM

How is your vocabulary? There is no better or more fascinating way to improve it than by solving these anagrams each week. Add the letters in the first column to the letters in the second column, and rearrange the letters so as to form a new word. EXAMPLE: FEND plus SEE equals? Answer: DEFENSE. Can you solve the following anagrams?

(1)	**RANT**	**EQUALS**	**???**	**PLUS**	**IRE**
(2)	**GLEE**	"	"	"	**AIM**
(3)	**ROPE**	"	"	"	**RAT**
(4)	**THEM**	"	"	"	**SIC**
(5)	**SEED**	"	"	"	**PIT**

Solution to today's ANAGRAM on Page 10.